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**REGISTRATION OPENS FOR 2005
NATIONAL VETERANS WHEELCHAIR GAMES IN MINNEAPOLIS**

MINNEAPOLIS – January 19, 2005 – Registration is open for the largest annual wheelchair sports event in the world, the 25th National Veterans Wheelchair Games. Nearly 600 veterans from across the United States, Puerto Rico and Great Britain are expected to compete in the Games, taking place for the first time in Minnesota, June 28-July 1, 2005.

Presented by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), the Games are open to all U.S. military veterans who use wheelchairs for sports competition due to spinal cord injuries, certain neurological conditions, amputations or other mobility impairments. The Minneapolis VA Medical Center and the PVA Minnesota Chapter are hosting the Games this year.

Wheelchair sports can play an important role in the lives of disabled people and have a lasting importance on their lives. For many newly injured veterans, this event is their first exposure to wheelchair athletics. Veterans interested in competing in the Games may call the PVA Sports Department to receive an application, at (800) 424-8200. It is also available on the event's web site, www.wheelchairgames.org.

Competitive events will be held at the Minneapolis Convention Center, Fort Snelling Soccer Fields, University of St. Thomas, Lake Harriet and other local venues. The 2005 Games will include competitions in track and field events, swimming, basketball, weightlifting, softball, quad rugby, air guns, 9-ball, bowling, table tennis, archery, hand cycling, a motorized rally, power soccer and wheelchair slalom, which is a timed obstacle course. Trap shooting and golf will be offered as exhibition events. The athletes compete in all events against others with similar athletic ability, competitive experience or age.

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Registration Opens for Wheelchair Games 2/2/2/2

In addition to the competitions and the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, the event will include a "Kids Day at the Games" on Thursday, June 30, when local children, including some with disabilities, will interact with the athletes, participate in some sports events and watch the veterans compete. The public is invited to attend any or all of the sports competitions throughout the week of the Games. Admission is free.

The theme for the Minneapolis Games – "Catch the Spirit" – reflects the great fishing and outdoor sporting opportunities in the Twin Cities area. The theme honors the veterans' competitive spirit while recognizing the active and fun spirit of the people of Minnesota.

According to Sharon Skoblik, local coordinator for the 2005 Games, the event will require more than 2,500 volunteers. There are numerous opportunities to volunteer at the Games. Assignments include serving as greeters, setting up venues, assisting with meals and transportation, or helping the athletes get ready to compete. More information about volunteer opportunities is available by calling (612) 467-5273, or on the Games web site.

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About VA: The Department of Veterans Affairs is a world leader in rehabilitation, with recreation therapy programs at each of its medical facilities. VA's goal is to provide excellence in patient care, veterans' benefits and customer satisfaction. VA employees continue to offer their dedication and commitment to help veterans get the services they have earned. To learn about VA and programs for veterans, visit VA's web site at www.va.gov.

About PVA: Founded in 1946, Paralyzed Veterans of America is the only congressionally chartered veterans service organization dedicated solely for the benefit and representation of individuals with spinal cord injury or disease. PVA is a dynamic, broad-based organization with more than 21,000 members in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. To learn more about PVA, visit its web site at www.pva.org.

For more information about the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, or to follow events as they happen, visit the Games web site at www.wheelchairgames.org.